

The Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
St. Luke 1:39-56
July 2nd, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When Elizabeth Heard the Greeting

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we celebrate the Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth, her relative. If we consider the timeline according to the events of Holy Scripture, the events of today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke takes place shortly after the Annunciation of the birth of our Lord + Jesus by the Angel Gabriel, which we celebrate on March 25. We are told that upon receiving that announcement from the Angel Gabriel, and having heard the good news that her relative Elizabeth, who was barren, was now pregnant, the Blessed Virgin Mary "went with haste" into the hill country to her cousin Elizabeth, and her husband Zechariah. This means that these events that we hear about today take place in Holy Scripture shortly after March 25th.

We are also told by the Evangelist St. Luke that the Blessed Virgin Mary stayed with her relative Elizabeth for three months. Elizabeth was six months pregnant with St. John the Baptist when the Blessed Virgin Mary arrived, and now three months later St. John the Baptist has been born. The festival in the Church's year that celebrates the birth—or nativity—of St. John the Baptist is celebrated on our calendars on June 24th—six months before the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord + Jesus Christ. It is celebrated on the 24th instead of the 25th in order to give the precedence to our Lord + Jesus. St. John the Baptist must decrease, while our Lord + Jesus increases in fame and stature.

What that means is that the festival of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist was eight days ago. In other words, this Festival of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth is celebrated on the eight day after St. John the Baptist's birth. Or, to say it another way, this festival falls on the day when St. John the Baptist would be named and circumcised. So then, the Visitation is celebrated on the naming of the forerunner of the Christ, and at the time in the Holy Scriptures that the Blessed Virgin Mary would be returning to Nazareth.

But this festival's placement in the Church's year, six months before Christmas—sixth months before the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord + Jesus Christ—is meant to direct our eyes forward to the incarnation of our Lord. Having just come through the solemnities of our Lord's crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection and ascension. And having celebrated the outpouring the Holy Ghost upon His Church on Whitsunday, our eyes are focused toward the beginning of our salvation at our Lord's incarnation. We are brought into the great circle of the Church's year; the cycle that continues to walk us through our Lord + Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God the

Father. We are brought to look forward to the birth of our Lord by showing us that the incarnation of our Lord + Jesus—His taking into the Godhead the flesh of mankind—has already taken place at the conception of Lord in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This is shown us by what takes place when the Blessed Virgin greeted her relative Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of the Virgin Mary, the babe in her womb leaped for joy.

This should be the reaction of all of mankind when told of the good news of our Lord's incarnation. When we hear that our Lord has taken upon Himself our flesh, with no sin in it, so that He might fulfill the Law perfectly for us in this flesh of mankind, and suffer and die on the tree of the holy cross in the flesh of mankind the punishment that we deserve on account of our manifold transgressions, we should also leap with joy. The whole world should leap with joy just as St. John the Baptist did in the womb of his mother Elizabeth. We should leap for joy that God has been made man—two natures dwelling in the one Person of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ.

Sadly, the world does not leap for joy when they hear this great good news. The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Magnificat, which we have recorded for us today in the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, proclaims that there will be those who have no need for the Lord + Jesus—no need for the babe in her womb. They will not listen to the babe in Elizabeth's womb—St. John the Baptist. Nor will they listen and heed the voice of the Lord God, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin. They will not even listen to the voice of those sent by the Lord—the Apostles and all the Ministers of the Lord from the time of our Lord Christ even to today.

The people listed by the Virgin Mary are the ones who are proud of themselves and their own works—the ones consumed with the imaginations of their own hearts. She also speaks against the rich. The ones who cling to their earthly possessions as a means of salvation and hope and joy. The ones who like the rich man in the Gospel reading from two Sundays ago, fare sumptuously every day, but ignore the plight of their fellowman. The ones who lack true faith in God, and ignore the promises of Moses and the Prophets. She speaks against the mighty in their own eyes; the ones who look to rule upon this earth, and treat every else has subjects to be ruled. They sit on their thrones in arrogance unaware that their destruction nears. The proud, the mighty, and the rich are a complete description of the unbelievers in this world. They have no need for the Lord + Jesus; no need for the salvation that He brings. Therefore, they will share the fate of the rich man from that Gospel from the First Sunday after Trinity—they will be forever tormented in Hell longing for a drop of water to quench their thirst.

But the Blessed Virgin Mary has more blessings to give than curses. For she proclaims all the good things that the lowly, humble and contrite have on account of their acknowledgment of their sinfulness, and their faith in the One, True Lord and Savior, our Lord + Jesus Christ. For this Lord + Jesus Who dwells in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and only a few days old past being conceived does consider the lowly estate of those who believe on Him. His mercy on those who fear Him. For those who fear Him humble themselves before Him. We humble ourselves before Him by daily confessing our sins; acknowledging that we are indeed poor, miserable sinners in need of God's grace, and confessing that we cannot save ourselves by our good works, but we can only be saved by the work of the baby in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Only through our Lord's perfect fulfillment of the Law, and His suffering and dying in our place on the cross can we be saved; only through His works and merits. Having heard this great good news, the Holy Ghost creates faith in us to believe in this promise of the forgiveness of our sins, the promise of an eternal life in Heaven, and the promise of salvation and rescue from our enemies of sin, death and the devil. We cling in faith and hope to these promises. And when we hear them, they are good news to us. Such good news that we leap in joy, just like St. John the Baptist did in the womb of his mother. For our Lord + Jesus has been conceived in the flesh—God has become man for us. He has

saved us by becoming one of us. This is what He promised to Abraham, and to all his descendants; that a Savior would be born through the line of King David, Who would redeem His people from their sins.

We are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. This promise is also for us. The Lord + Jesus was conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of the Blessed Virgin Mary especially for all of us who believe on Him; for all those who cling to His works and merits, and confess our sins daily. We remember daily our Holy Baptism, that we were washed in the Blood of the Lamb, our Lord + Jesus Christ. The Old Adam in us as been drowned and killed. We stand before our Lord + Jesus as new creations; as newborn babies who love to leap with joy at the good gift which our Lord + Jesus has prepared for us.

He has prepared for us a Great Supper. A supper of His Body and Blood to give us forgiveness, life and salvation. Let us come before this altar often and receive our Lord's Body and Blood given in bread and wine for the remission of our sins. And having received it, let us leap for joy in our hearts that our sins have been forgiven, and that we have an eternal life waiting for us in Heaven with all the saints who died in the faith, and that we have been delivered from the power of sin, death and the devil. This great good news should cause our hearts to leap with joy.

When Elizabeth heard the greeting of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the babe in her womb leaped for joy, because the Lord + Jesus had come. When we hear the preaching of the Gospel in its truth and purity and when we receive the Blessed Sacraments as they were instituted by Christ, let us also leap with joy. For our Lord + Jesus comes to us through these means, and imparts His gifts to us. For He does not consider our lowly, sinful estate, but through His mercy, exalts us to be His own dear brothers and sisters, and children and heirs of the heavenly Father. Praise be to Him alone for all eternity. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!